WHEN LOVE Came Too Late.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"We Shall Save Him Yet."

"Yes, my lord," said Bessie, firmly, "and I will find him and bring him to her, if he is to be found."

She caught the evening up-train, and though she had never been in London before, she faced its strangeness and its vastness without quailing; it seemed as if Olivia had infused something of her own desperate courage and energy into the timid country girl.

She drove to Scotland Yard, and after five minutes' waiting, during which, by the way, Mr. McAndrew had been calmly and keenly scrutinising her from behind a curtain, he entered.

Bessie delivered Olivia's message word for word.

He looked at her with the simple smile which made his face so innocent and commonplace, then nodded.

"So your mistress wants to see Lord Bertie, does she?" he said, in a kindly fashion. "Hem! so do I; and perhaps we shall both see him presently. What's this?" he asked, as Bessie put the necklace-case in his hand.

"My—my mistress said you would want money, and sent this," faltered Bessie.

The great man smiled softly and opened the case, then suddenly his face changed, and his eyes, as they scanned the magnificent gems closely, grew sharp and keen. But it was only for an instant; the next moment his expression was that of the simple, commonplace individual.

"Where did you get this from—your mistress, I mean?" he askked.

"It was her wedding present from Mr. Faradeane," replied Bessie, in a faltering voice.

"Oh," he said, slowly, "from Mr. Faradeane. Hem!" He snapped-to the case and put it in his pocket. "Yes, we detectives always want money, and you can tell your mistress I'll take care of this. Oh, yes, she can rest easy. I'll take care of it." He stood looking at her in silence for a moment, then he said: "And so your mistress saw Mr. Faradeane in prison this morning, eh?"

Bessie started and crimsoned, and he laughed.

"Now you can go back; you don't mind traveling all night, do you? Because your mitsress will be anxious, you know."

"Oh, yes, yes," assented Bessie, eagerly, "and if I can only take her some good news!" and she clasped her hands.

Mr. McAndrew looked down at her thoughtfully, then he smiled and offered her his arm. "I'll take you to the station," he said. He got her some refreshment, put her in a first-class carriage, and, but not until the train was upon the point of starting, said, "How is Mr. Bartley Bradstone?"

Indeed, the engine shrieked and was off with its burden before Bessie could reply.

It was not until she had traveled some distance on her return journey that she realized, what a great many other persons before her had realized, that she had not got anything very definite out of Mr. McAndrew. She had seemed, indeed, to have had no will of her own while in his presence, and to have done exactly as he told her.

She reached Wainford very tired and very dissatisfied, and found a carriage waiting for her.

"Why, now did you know I was coming?" she asked the coachman, who was an old friend of hers.

"The mistress had a telegram from London," he said. "Leastways a telegram came for her this morning."

Bessie stared at him with her eyes widely opened.

"I didn't telegraph," she said. "I meant to take a fly home."

"Well," he laughed, "here we are, you see, and you'd better get in, anyhow."

Puzzled and bewildered, she was about to follow his sensible recommendation, when a woman, with a child in her arms, came up quickly, and, pulling at her jacket, said, with a mixture of timidity and earnestness:

"Stop, stop, for God's sake, miss. I—I must speak to you! I've been waiting and watching——"

Bessie turned affrightedly, and, as the light fell upon her face, the woman shrank back with a cry of disappointment.

"Oh!" she cried, "I thought it was the young lady—leastways Mrs. Bradstone."

"No, I am her maid," said Bessie. "What is it? Are you ill?" for the woman looked worn and pale, and there were deep lines of anxiety and trouble on her thin face.

"Ill? Yes, miss. I'm ill enough, but it isn't that. I'm no account. It was——" She looked round fearfully. "Come out of hearing, miss!" she whispered, imploringly. "It may be too late—but it's not my fault. I've waited and watched, but I'm watched too. It's about the—murder, miss!"

Bessie's courage and self-possession came back in an instant.

"Wait a moment, James," she said to the coachman, and she followed the woman into the shadow of the station wall.

"I thought it was the young lady," she said, speaking timidly, and with palpable agitation, and hushing the child she carried under her shawl. "I tried to speak to her before, by the lodge gate, where you lived."

"I remember," said Bessie. "You are the gypsy woman."

"Yes, I'm Liz Lee," assented the woman, "and I want to tell her something that I'm afraid to whisper. I'm doing it at the risk of my life, miss I am, indeed!" and she looked up with a piteous terror into Bessie's eager eyes. "He's promised to do for me, if I dare open my lips! And he'll keep his promise!"

"He? Who?" asked Bessie.

"My husband," came the reply. "He thinks I'm safe at the camp; but I slipped out—and followed the carriage; I thought I was going to meet the young lady." She struggled for the breath which her agitation and alarm seemed to deprive her of; then looking round fearfully, went on: "Is it true, miss, that he'll be hung?"

Bessie's face paled.

"Do you mean Mr. Faradeane?"

The woman nodded, with a sob.

"Yes, yes. Oh, miss, if they only knew! Him commit a murder! Why, he wouldn't kick a dog as bit 'im, leave alone shoot a helpless woman!"

Bessie could have fallen upon the poor creature's neck.

"Go on, go on!" she said, trembling. "You know something! You will not let him come to harm?"

"No, miss—if I could help it. Look here!" She drew her shawl aside, and revealed the face of a little child sleeping peacefully in her arms. "If it hadn't have been for him she'd have been underground by this time! He saved her life; yes, he did! He spoke to me as nobody ever spoke before, and I can't—I can't—let him come to harm!"

"Go on, go on!" implored Bessie.

The woman drew closer to her.

"I know who did the murder, miss!" she whispered, huskily.

Bessie caught her arm.

"Tell me! tell me!" she panted.

The woman trembled under the grasp.

"Promise me, swear to me, miss, that you won't tell who told you—won't give my name up."

"I promise," said Bessie, solemnly; "whatever happens, you shall come to no hurt. I promise for him, as well as for myself."

"Ah, no; he wouldn't see me hurt!" said Liz Lee. "Well, then——"

She stopped suddenly and uttered a cry.

A carriage had dashed up to the station at a tremendous rate; the whistle of the up-train was heard in the distance.

"Quick! quick!" exclaimed Bessie.

But the woman seemed to have lost all power of speech, and was staring at the carriage from which a gentleman had alighted.

Bessie looked over her shoulder. It was Mr. Bartley Bradstone.

"You know him!" she said, instantly. "Does he know anything of the murder; does he——"

The woman shuddered as she watched him go up the stairs.

"No, it's a fate!" she gasped. "Oh, I'm afraid to tell, afraid, afraid!" and she seemed unable to remove her eyes from his receding figure.

Bessie almost shook in her agony of suspense.

"You must!" she said. "You have gone too far."

"If I must!" panted the woman. "Yes, he does know. Don't let him go! Do you hear? Stop him! Follow him——"

In her uncertainty and excitement, Bessie took half a dozen steps towards the station platform.

Then she turned, and, with a start, found a man standing between her and the woman, who was cowering against the wall, as if she had just received a blow.

"What, you, Liz!" he said, addressing the woman, but keeping his eyes on Bessie. "You're drunk again, are yer? What plant have you been a-puttin' on this young lady? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. What's she been a-sayin', miss?" And he turned to Bessie with a half-threatening, half-whining air. "Something about this yer murder, wasn't it? Blessed if this yer murder haven't gone and turned my missus' head. Don't pay any attention to her, miss! I 'umbly begs pardon for her. She ought to know better than to stop a lady with her rubbidge!" and, seizing the woman's arm, he hurried her to the steps.

"Stop!" said Bessie, "stop! She is not drunk, and you know it! She shall speak!"

The man glanced hurriedly up at the platform, at which the up-train was just arriving, and, tightening his hold on the woman's arm, swung her round. She was crying covertly.

(To be Continued.)

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